

## **PRESS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release  
No. 21/06

September 11, 2006

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### **First Lady Anne Holton to kick off Richmond Times-Dispatch Kids Marathon program on Tues., Sept. 12 at Cool Spring Elementary School**

**Free program aims to be fun, incentive-based way to introduce kids to exercise**

RICHMOND, VA – First Lady of Virginia Anne Holton will be on hand at Cool Spring Elementary School in Hanover County tomorrow, September 12 at 11 a.m. to help kick off this fall's Richmond Times-Dispatch Kids Marathon program, the free incentive-based fitness program for elementary school-aged children throughout the metro Richmond area. Ms. Holton will join 5<sup>th</sup> graders from the school as they begin the 9-week program with their first laps around the school's track.

"We're all aware of studies documenting the increasing youth obesity problem in America," said Faith Hecht, who is coordinating the program for the Sports Backers. "The Richmond Times-Dispatch Kids Marathon program aims to tackle the dilemma head on. By introducing kids to the benefits of a healthy, active lifestyle during their formative years, we hope to encourage and develop habits that will last a lifetime."

The teachers and administrators at Cool Spring Elementary School have chosen to make the program a school-wide project for their first through fifth graders and children will be encouraged to run with their classes during the school day. Administrators, teachers, and several of the school's classes will be on hand for the kick-off in which the children will have the opportunity to run and track their first mile with Ms. Holton.

The Times-Dispatch Kids Marathon culminates with the Richmond Times-Dispatch Kids Run on Saturday, November 11, 2006. The program will encourage youth to run 26 miles over the course of a 9-week program. The program will be flexible and allow for teachers, volunteers, and parents to take the initiative to get kids started in the program. Running logs may be picked up at any Richmond-area Chick-fil-A location or downloaded at [www.sportsbackers.org](http://www.sportsbackers.org).

Participants in the Kids Marathon will track their progress on a running log (coloring sheet) and receive incentive prizes at the 5-, 10-, 15-, and 20-mile marks along the way from program sponsors. Children can run their miles anywhere they want...home, during recess at school, soccer practice, or wherever and whenever they can. Children will keep track of their mileage based on the honor system with supervision from a parent, teacher, or facilitator.

Sponsors of the program include the Richmond Times-Dispatch, Chick-fil-A, Paramount's Kings Dominion and the Science Museum of Virginia. Additional program support is provided by the Alcoa Foundation, the Community Foundation, the Robins Foundation, the Mary Morton Parsons Foundation and KraftFoods.

The program was developed by the Sports Backers – organizers of the successful YMCA 10k Training Team, the SunTrust Richmond Marathon and the Ukrop's Monument Avenue 10k – to motivate youth to become more physically active and to build their self-confidence.

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Directions to Cool Spring Elementary School: Take I-95 to the Atlee exit (#86A). Proceed to the first traffic light at Atlee Station Road (Route 637). Turn right on Atlee Station Road and continue approximately three miles. Turn left onto Honey Meadows Road (just before getting to Chickahominy Middle School). Cool Spring Elementary is a short distance down the road.